Student Resources Worksheets

**Generating Questions**

This worksheet helps start with two topics and end up with two “good” research questions by spiraling (writing and thinking) through the process. If you only have one and you’re convinced it is a good one, then you may eliminate the second column. If you have three topics, then change the pay layout to landscape and add a column. Look at the examples in the book to help you. A second chart helps you be confident of your work.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Candidate Topic 1 | Candidate Topic 2 |
| Specify the topic |  |  |
| Why interesting to multiple audiences?  (answer separately for scholars, policy makers, and citizens) |  |  |
| Why important to multiple audiences?  (answer for separately scholars, policy makers, and citizens) |  |  |
| Write first draft of question by forcing a “good” starting word. | Start with “Why,” “How,” “To what extent . . .” | Start with “Why,” “How,” “To what extent . . .” |
| Does draft question have answer in it? (If so, pull answer out and focus on the general phenomenon) |  |  |
| Is draft question nontrivial? (If not, revise here.) | Are you seeking not simply to learn something that you can easily find out, but to answer a question that has not been answered or is debated? | Are you seeking not simply to learn something that you can easily find out, but to answer a question that has not been answered or is debated? |
| Is draft question short and direct? (If not, revise here) |  |  |
| Is draft question apparently doable? (If not, revise here) | Will you be able to get access to the data (information) you need in order to evaluate it? | Will you be able to get access to the data (information) you need in order to evaluate it? |
| Is draft question puzzling? | How does your question raise issues about the conventional wisdom or suggest that existing interpretations may be incomplete? | How does your question raise issues about the conventional wisdom or suggest that existing interpretations may be incomplete? |

Your Question: After having worked through the chart above and thought more about which question you prefer, revise your preferred question one more time based on guidelines above and in Chapter 2. Write question in first box of chart below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RQ:** | |
| **Criterion to satisfy:** | **“Doneness” Check** |
| **Research Question (RQ) basics:** | “Good” starting words \_\_\_\_\_\_  Answer is not in RQ \_\_\_\_\_\_  RQ is brief \_\_\_\_\_\_  RQ appears doable \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| RQ is **interesting to scholars** because . . . | Answer to RQ addresses theoretical debate/s (name it/them explicitly?) \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| RQ is **interesting to policy makers** because . . . | Answer to RQ provides insight into policy problems (name them in generic and specific terms).  \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| RQ is **interesting to citizens** because . . . | Answer to RQ addresses issues citizens care (or should care) about. \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| RQ is **nontrivial** because . . . | RQ is nontrivial because the answer is not simply factual and easy to find and various audiences are arguing about it. \_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| RQ is **puzzling** because . . . | RQ raises issues about the conventional wisdom or suggests that existing interpretations may be incomplete. *(Answer here is related to why RQ is interesting to scholars.)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_ |